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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Radio Free Europe Radio Broadcasts to Hungary

REFERENCE : Memorandum from Department of State, dated 26 November 1956, Subject as Above

1. Two assistants to the Inspector General were inspecting Radio Free Europe in Munich from 7-14 November and returned to Headquarters 21 November. Their appraisal of RFE operations at this critical time may be relevant to the contention in the referenced memorandum that selected scripts reviewed by the Department of State "raise basic questions regarding the extent to which RFE operations are being carried on within the context of established policy guidance and whether it is possible to have really effective control of operations under existing procedures."

2. Facts.

a. On 2 November in New York, the Free Europe Committee President (General Crittenberger) told the Inspectors that, in the then current phase of the Hungarian revolution, some of RFE's Munich output had seemed to the RFE review section in New York to be too predictional and that he had found it advisable to cable Munich to stick to the facts and not embroider them; he had repeated this injunction in a cable specifically referring to the need not to complicate the activities of Ambassador Lodge in the U. N. Thereafter, on the second of November, the Yugoslav Ambassador had approached Under Secretary Murphy and put it that RFE had been unhelpfully critical of the then incumbent Imre Nagy. As a result, Crittenberger was dispatching the RFE Program Director [redacted] from New York to Munich.

b. On 7 November in Munich, the Inspectors interviewed the European Director, RFE [redacted]. At this time, the violent Soviet counteraction had been going on for two days. [redacted] described how the freedom radios in Hungary had been, and were still, directly addressing RFE, and added that one rebel-held town had passed its flag over the border to RFE for safe keeping. He told how the American Staff had been assembled on Monday, 5 November, and instructed not to take an apologetic position vis-a-vis the RFE emigres. In

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the ensuing 48 hours, the RFE Hungarians, under [redacted] had arrived at the thesis that the Hungarian rebels had lost the fighting phase of the revolution, but not necessarily the other aspects.

c. The Inspectors attended, on 7 November, the regular morning policy meeting of the U. S. staff with the Hungarian section. RFE was still monitoring the patriot radios and rebroadcasting their messages and was to work during the day to see what could be done to carry out the freedom fighters' request that messages be radioed to the Soviet troops involved in the reprisals.

d. On 9 November, the Inspectors spent three hours with the RFE Policy Adviser, [redacted] He made the following observations:

(1) The facts of the Hungarian developments illuminate the important extent to which tactical coincidences had caused the revolution to enlarge, principally that the top official Hungarians were physically in Yugoslavia at the time of the outbreak and that the rebels had been able to take over numerous radio facilities early in the revolt.

(2) The developments in Hungary upset a number of previously firm U. S. policy assumptions, i.e.: (a) that evolution is the most that can be hoped for, with the implicit assumption that revolution is impossible; (b) that the youth and students, having been subjected to communist indoctrination for ten years, are lost to the cause of freedom; and (c) that establishing National Communism in the Satellites will produce relatively stable conditions.

(3) The Imre Nagy incident demonstrated the necessity for RFE, New York, to follow the telex carefully and thus be able to state promptly what it is that RFE is alleged to have said at any given moment.

(4) RFE (and U. S.) stock in Hungary will be very low for a long time. The RFE exiles were in a state of shock as a result of the developments and would prefer to fuzz up this problem, but RFE proposed to meet it head-on by explaining as fully as possible the factors underlying U. S. inability to do more than it did.

e. On 10 November, the Inspectors spent three hours with the European Director of the Free Europe Citizens Service (Mr. Bauer). He had just returned from five days in Vienna and Hungarian border areas and had talked with many Hungarian escapees. He said that there were an undoubtedly large number of these escapees who, in the initial shock of escaping from the terror and in the heat of their frustration, naturally were critical of the West, specifically the United States, and even more specifically RFE. He had, however, talked with some who realized the limitations on Western action and who praised RFE for the job it had done during the revolt as well as for the job it had done over the previous five years. To some of these escapees the suggestion that RFE had caused the revolution was repugnant to their own firm conviction that the Hungarians had done for themselves that which freedom-loving men can only do for themselves.

4. Conclusions.

a. It is the opinion of the Inspectors, insofar as they could reach an opinion on the basis of their presence in New York and Munich during this period, that the activities of the Free Europe Committee in the Hungarian crisis were vigorously pursued, intelligently directed, and correctly motivated by a clear understanding of United States policy, coupled with a realistic appreciation of the limitations on U. S. official action. In Munich, a professionally-trained staff worked around the clock under great pressure and bore up with extraordinarily calm but forceful demeanor. The responsible officials of RFE then met the initial wave of anti-RFE feeling with consistent and dignified reaction. They promptly made available to the German government all tapes and scripts requested and similarly responded to approaches from private newspapers and periodicals.

b. It is the feeling of the undersigned that almost all of the official criticism of RFE noted by them to date in Paris and Washington is due to the unseemly spectacle of making RFE a scapegoat for U. S. failures and inabilities to act inside and outside of Hungary, since it is easier to credit RFE erroneously for causing what took place in Hungary than it is to make an honest reappraisal of the basic policy assumptions which the Hungarian developments at least cast in some doubt. It is particularly disgusting to find RFE criticized for inciting the Hungarian revolution by those who, over the last five years, have criticized RFE for being ineffective.

5. Recommendations.

The Inspectors do not believe that any new controls over RFE operations are necessary or desirable. It would be advisable to increase the current effort in two existing methods of control, namely:

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(1) The material telexed daily from Munich to New York should be increased to include more of the details of the daily guidance achieved in Munich each morning, so that New York can be even more fully informed on a current basis.

(2) There should be an appreciable increase in brief temporary duty travel of responsible operating personnel to and from New York and Munich, to supplement written understandings by face-to-face consideration of present and future problems.

/s/ Lyman Kirkpatrick

Lyman B. Kirkpatrick
Inspector General

cc: C/IO